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SERMON BY THE RIGHT REV. WILLIAM WHITE, D. D.

SERMON BY THE RIGHT REV. HENRY USTICK ONDERDONK, D. D.

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OF THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH:

A Sermon

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Ps. xxiii. 4—" *Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*"

It is a saying of the wise king of Israel — "The light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun: but if a man live many years and rejoice in them all, yet, let him remember the days of darkness." The advice is in harmony with what we know of nature and of providence; so that, however contradictory to some may seem the connexion thus made, between all things attractive of desire, and the darkness which will overwhelm them; the recollection of the one is necessary to the highest enjoyment of the other.

Brethren; We have this day entered on a new year: an occasion which has commonly the effect of determining the mind to new objects, and of elevating it with new hopes. The civilities with which we are accustomed to meet one another at such a time, are evidence that the prospect of another year is a reasonable subject of congratulation. It is not the design to suggest what shall be in contrariety to the innocent satisfactions of the season. Far from it, in the spirit as well of the season as of the passage quoted, there is cherished the wish in favor of all present, that "they may live many years, and rejoice in them all." But for the accomplishing of this, and, much more with a view to higher interests, there will be use in having an eye to

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the other part of the passage, — the remembering of that darkness, by which the brightest prospects may be soon clouded, and in which all human affairs will at last end.

Under the impression of this sentiment, the text shall be considered,

I. As referring to the sure end of human life :

II. As providing the proper remedy against the fear of it : and,

III. As directing the application of the remedy, for the cure or for the moderating of the evil.

I. First, the text is to be considered as referring to the sure end of human life.

This is suggested by the first clause of the sentence — “though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.” The words seem to have been intended in the strictest sense, as descriptive of the dissolution of our bodies. In the beginning of the psalm, the author of it had described the divine mercies in his possession, under the picturesque representation of being “fed” by his Almighty Shepherd “in green pastures,” and of being “led by him beside the waters of comfort.” Then he seems to have recollected, that, as in the rural scene presented, the sheep, while they crop the springing grass, may wander from their shepherd, in like manner the dependents on the divine bounty may forget the Providence that sustains them, and wander in the paths of sin. On this account, he goes on in a grateful acknowledgment of the admonitions and the persuasions by which, if submitted to on their part, the heavenly Shepherd reclaims his children from the errors into which, through frailty, they had fallen. Having thus given the liveliest exhibitions of providence and of grace, he remembered that the picture has its shade ; and that beside the rivulets and the lawns, there is a dark vale which terminates the whole view.

This is the vale of death : and there is the ground of the metaphor in the description of Jerusalem and of the country around it. In all nations, the phrases of their respective languages are, in some measure, dictated by local circumstances. The city of Jerusalem was on an eminence ; and one of the approaches to it was by a valley, which bore the name of Baca,

that is, of weeping. The heavenly Zion, the blessed abode of the deceased righteous, occurred to the mind of the sacred poet, under the metaphor of a hill, lifting its head above the sorrows of this transitory life : and then, the vale of weeping naturally suggested the other metaphor, of "the valley of the shadow of death;" which earthly pilgrims must pass over, in their way to the new Jerusalem.

Although this seems to be the strict meaning of the expression, as used by the Psalmist, there will be no impropriety, and it will fall in with the present design, if we contemplate the metaphor in a greater latitude, as extending to those ills of life, which partake of the properties of the awful idea stated: to pain and sickness; to poverty; to the weaknesses of old age; and to the dangers into which we may fall, at any period of life. The associating of these with that last end to which they point, is natural to the human mind: so that if the latter may be called "the valley of the shadow of death," the others are so many entrances into that dark vale. If some return from them for a little while, to "the green pastures and the waters of comfort;" yet of the whole race of mankind, who at last descend into the recess, there are few who have not, in some of the ways referred to, anticipated its gloom.

Not only the sorrows of life, but life itself, may be called the valley of the shadow of death; because of the many dangers which we carry within us, and of those by which we are continually surrounded. How nice, and how liable to injury is the human frame! Solomon calls the essential principle which keeps its powers in action, "a silver cord;" which, it is intimated, may soon "be broken." There are innumerable dangers to which this slender cord is liable, from the least passing of the bounds of temperance; from various other species of indiscretion; and at all events, from old age; by which, if attained to, it will be at last weakened and destroyed. If, from dangers inherent to our constitution, we pass to those which are without us, we perceive the earth, the waters, and the very air, to abound with engines of our destruction. Beside all this, the injurious passions of mankind are continually at work, to add to

their common difficulties and dangers. It is a remarkable expression in one of the offices of the Church — “In the midst of life, we are in death.” The truth of the sentiment appears in daily occurrences, which we hear of, which we see, and which are sometimes brought home to our feelings. If so, the whole of human life may be considered as the valley of the shadow of death; and every part of life, as saddened by some portion of the darkness hanging over its end.

Still, the expression must have been designed by the Psalmist in its strictest sense: and it having been so stated, we may proceed,

II. Secondly; To consider the text as providing a remedy against the fear of the event contemplated. This is the sentiment of the other clause of the passage — “I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

“I will fear no evil.” There was a certain philosophy of ancient times, which, while it set itself in just opposition to the placing of happiness in sensual delights, ran into a visionary extreme; pretending, that death, with its kindred ills of pain, poverty, and whatever else is formidable to human nature, are no evils. The holy Scriptures are in a medium between the affected severity of the one system, and the licentiousness of the other: so that while the soul is fortified against the slavish fear of ills incident to our condition, we are not required to be void of sensibility in the endurance of them. The text is an instance of this. The inspired penman does not say, that there is no evil in the contemplated appointments of Providence; but opposes certain consolations, which he had found a remedy for their terrors. “For,” says he, “thou art with me;” meaning not merely in the sense, in which we read in another of the Psalms — “Thou art about my path and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways;” but in that which may be collected from the words following; being a repetition of the sentiment, with greater clearness as to its meaning — “Thy rod,” that is, the sceptre of thy authority, held out for my protection, “and thy staff,” or the emblem of the guiding of my steps, “they comfort me.”

The lowest sense in which the words can be taken, is as applicable to the providential care of God. This is significantly expressed by the shepherd's rod and staff, extended over his flock for their protection. The sentiment may be applied, so far as Providence is concerned, to the universe of being; of whom it is said — "These wait all upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season." But to render this rod and this staff a matter of consolation to the mind, they must be seen, they must be felt, they must be confided in. The prophet Isaiah pathetically complains — "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Agreeably to the lesson intimated in this complaint, we must know our almighty Owner, and feel ourselves the feeders at his crib, before the truth of his superintending providence can either present a pleasing idea to the understanding, or awaken a delightful feeling in the heart.

But the words reach to a stronger sense; and set before us the admonitions, the strivings, and the consolations of the divine spirit. This is evident from the connexion of the verse with that preceding it; where it is said — "Thou shalt convert my soul, and bring me forth into the paths of righteousness." For, when it is immediately added — "Even in the valley of the shadow of death, thy rod and staff comfort me;" it must include all that had gone before; that is, not only the mercies of God in his providence, but also the inward suasions of his grace.

Further, the words suppose the sense of divine love and approbation. The psalm is full of a well-grounded confidence in the favor of God; and certainly, nothing short of this can cheer the soul in its descent into the dark vale of death.

If it be asked — On what ground can so animating a confidence be founded? The answer is, that in circumstances not favored with the light of revelation, it may arise, although in a less clear degree, from the source which St. Peter points to where he says — "In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Under the law given to the Jews, it was the living according to the conditions of the covenant; in which, although "the fearing of God and

the keeping of his commandments" was, as it must be under all circumstances, the whole ultimate "duty of man;" yet there were intermediate duties, not only for the purpose of security to the greatest duties of all, but to be the figures of truths which should be manifested, and the inspirers of hopes which should be accomplished in due time. Under the Christian dispensation, it is the embracing of its offers, and the living agreeably to its precepts. In this respect, its leading sense cannot be better expressed than in the Collect of the late season; in which we prayed, that "being regenerate, and made the children of God by adoption and grace;" meaning, in the act of our admission to the Christian Church; "we may daily be renewed by the Holy Spirit." It is of the mercy of God, that we are admitted within the Christian covenant; and the meritorious ground of that admission has been accomplished for us, independently on our desires or our deserts. This benefit being extended to us of the free grace of God, his favor is to be cultivated, the conditions of the covenant are to be performed, and the happiness of heaven is to be prepared for, by living under the influence of the principle of evangelical righteousness; which, being daily strengthened by prayer, and by sincere endeavors to be conformed to the divine will, maintains a controlling influence over our hearts and over our actions.

There is still another sense, in which the Psalmist must have contemplated the shepherd's protecting "rod and staff." It is, as being extended over him, not only in his passage through the dark vale, but to whatever condition may have awaited him beyond it. He must have felt his mind sustained by the persuasion, that he could not pass to any region where the divine presence would not accompany him; that there could be no event in which the promises of God would fail; and, that there could be no state of being in which his goodness would cease to manifest itself to the devout and holy heart. In short, the prospect of the Psalmist must have reached the blissful state which, in another place, he so rapturously anticipates, where he says — "In thy presence is the fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore." This shows the error of

an opinion censured in one of the articles of our Church; that under the old dispensation, there was a looking to temporal promises only. Although such promises might have led to the contemplating of the providential care of God, in "the feeding in green pastures and the leading beside the waters of comfort," it could not have represented him as guiding through "the valley of death;" and much less, as pointing beyond its darkness to a light which gave an insight into the regions of eternal day.

All these things being included in the consolatory clauses of the text, there remains the third head; which was,

III. To consider the words as directing in what way the remedy may be the best applied, in reference to that "valley of the shadow of death," for which it was designed as a preparation.

On this part of the subject there might be brought into view every call of religion, every duty of life, in short, every thing that has a tendency to a preparation for our dissolution. But, agreeably to the train of sentiment in the text, all shall be considered as included in this single point — the beginning and the continuing to live in the enjoyment and under the check of the consolations which have been stated; and which, having been thus made familiar to the mind, cannot fail to occur to and sustain it, in the crisis when they will be the most wanted.

That this is the use of the remedy furnished to us by the passage, is evident from the order which we may observe in the reflections of the Psalmist. First, he had contemplated the goodness of the Divine Being, in his protecting and sustaining providence. Then he had gone on to the converting energies of his grace. From this, the transition was easy to the support which nature would look for, in death's dreary vale; but which he anticipated in the days of health and strength.

This being the lesson dictated by such a train of reflections, it is easy to trace its influence in its application to different states of life. Of those who are in affluence, or in easy circumstances, it points the attention to a benefactor, who "gives them all things richly to enjoy;" telling them, that if what ought to excite their gratitude, should have the opposite effect of depraving their

minds, of hardening their hearts, and of corrupting their morals, there happens to them what the Psalmist prophecies, not imprecates, in regard to the wicked, that "their table shall be made a snare to take themselves withal;" a snare, not laid for them by the Deity, but made such by their so perverting of his mercies as to render them the instruments of their ruin. Those who "eat the labor of their hands" it warns to look up to the same Being who gives strength proportioned to the exertions of industry, and who crowns it with success. And it directs them to confess His providence in the common ordering of life; that they may secure an easy retreat to it, when life shall be near to its end. Those who are in the vigor of youth, it instructs to secure so sure an alleviation of the sufferings and the infirmities of old age; and not only this, but so sure a preparation for those shafts of death which receive their commission not against the aged only, but against the young and healthy. Accordingly it instructs them to look up to the Author of their being and the bestower of their mercies, "before the evil days come, and the times draw nigh in which they shall say, There is no pleasure in them." Let them contemplate Him in his works; let them confess Him in His providence; let them keep up a communion with this Father of their spirits, in the exercises of devotion. Thus will they maintain that sense of His essential presence, which will accompany them in the worst events. Finally, the subject holds out to persons of every description, that the season of health and strength and spirits is the time in which they should begin to cultivate the favor of God, who may then be considered as pledging his gracious promise, that "even to hoar hairs" he "will sustain them" with his spiritual refreshments; and what is more, after "guiding them through life," will enlighten for them the dark "vale of death," through which he is to "receive them to glory."

What is it which principally occasions the gloom seen hanging over the retreat? In answering this question, allowance is to be made for a property of our nature, by which we shrink from death, however prepared to meet it: a property implanted for our preservation. But this does not account either for the fears

which distract the minds of some, or for the expedients which, for the silencing of those fears, others have recourse to, in order to keep away the apprehension from the minds of their dying friends. No; it is the painful conviction, that in the crisis in question, there will be need of consolations, which it is the least fit season to begin to have recourse to. If we were to pursue the sentiment, it would appear, that the duty of remembering our latter end, so as to give it a controlling influence over our conduct, is as conspicuous as any duty which we infer from our condition; or as any truth, which we found on our observation of nature. Why else do we, by an involuntary impulse, anticipate that last crisis? Why do we look beyond it for something still to come? Has God, who made nothing else in vain, unnecessarily ordained that man, when no alarm is heard, and when no danger threatens, shall have a monitor occasionally reminding him that he is to die? It is for the purpose of humbling his pride; of making him moderate in his enjoyments; of calling his attention to the Author and the Preserver of his being; of awakening his sensibilities to the rights and to the sorrows of his fellow-men; and finally, of transferring his hopes and of drawing his affections to that better life, in which "death will be swallowed up in victory."

In the opening and the illustrating of a single sentiment, there has been pointed out the application of the consolation of the text, to the remedy of the evil there also contemplated. The doing of this at the entrance on a new year, has been with the view of exhorting the hearers to govern their conduct on such a plan as shall be fruitful of the reflections which they cannot but wish to adorn the close of it; or sustain them under any events which may arrest them during its course.

Who can foretell in what way the next year will end; or what extraordinary calamities of war, of pestilence, and the like, may mark its progress? This is not said to imbitter life by an anticipation of its possible ills, but to suggest the sentiment, that the circumstance of our being aware of them must have been designed for some useful purpose. Can it be believed, that a

benevolent Being has subjected his creatures to a knowledge of the many dangers which surround them, without having provided for them the armor of a correspondent preparation of mind? No, thou great Creator and Preserver of men! Let them but habitually discern thy Almighty arm, as well in thy mercies as in thy judgments; and then no dangers shall drive them from their duties; no sorrows shall make them cast away their confidence in thee; and, even in the vale of death, they shall feel thy staff, sustaining and guiding them through its darkness.

Without having recourse to ills which may be thought barely possible, it is enough, that in the ordinary calamities of life, and in every portion of time, we behold death waving high his standard. It is enough, that in such an assembly as the present it cannot be supposed, that to all of us there remains another year of our probation. How awful is the thought, that of those whom death is marking as his victims, some may be unprepared for his stroke! It is with the hope of awakening them from such a state, that there has been now a train of reflections, which, if applied, will elevate them above the fear of the king of terrors, and guard them against its unhappy consequences.

Brethren; in a survey of this assembly, it might be uncharitable to contemplate any portion of them as looking forward to another year with intentional indulgence in any kind of conduct, for which they are already liable to the just judgments of a holy God. But it is not uncharitable, and it is conformable to experience to believe, that there are many anticipating another year, and perhaps an indefinite number of other years, without the thought of the casualties which may interfere to disappoint their expectations. This is a state of mind which gives ground for the apprehension of the want of preparation for an unexpected change. It would be a happy effect of the considerations which have been offered, that to the heart of any individual present, there should be brought a truth which must be known to be as evident as any that can come before our understandings; there being, within and around us, causes of dissolution which may be brought into action by the slightest occurrences; so as to break in an instant the silken ties of this mortal life.

If there should be the excitement of such a sensibility, the proper improvement of it is to the repentance which is “unto salvation;” to recourse to the mercy of God for pardon, through the merits of the adorable Redeemer; and to the “renewal after the image of Him who created us;” which is the only possible preparation for the enjoyment of his presence hereafter; and for the being, even here, delivered from a fearful apprehension, which cannot otherwise but sometimes intrude, of that “end of all men,” which “the living should lay to heart.”

With the view of impressing this, there shall be a repetition of the principal sentiment of the discourse — that now is especially the time to begin to cultivate a sense of the continual presence of God, in the mercies of his providence and in the influences of his grace: which, having been a living principle of conduct, will, in all the possible exigencies of life, and in the sure event of death, cause us to feel ourselves still under the rod of our spiritual Shepherd; and, after conducting us through the dark vale which we have been contemplating, will seat us in that better country, where there is “no need of the light of the sun nor of that of the moon to shine in it, but the LORD God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

Brethren; at this beginning of a new year, it may be profitable to look back on the occurrences of the old, so as to profit by any extraordinary event of it, which may be made to have a propitious influence on the annual point of time at which we have again arrived. It is still in our memories, and still interesting to our feelings, that an epidemical disorder, after having been reported to us from the climates of the East, and afterward from countries to which we are more allied by customs and by commerce, was at last permitted to invade our shores. Owing to the novelty of the disease, we were not prepared for it by medical experience; and although the well earned reputation of our physicians was sustained, by a speedy adaptation of their skill to the existing evil, yet it was not without much injury to the pursuits of industry, nor without its carrying off a considerable proportion of our population, with very short warnings, to their graves.

The use to be made of the retrospect, is its adding to the weight of the instructions, issuing ordinarily from the knowledge of the uncertainty of human life, by showing how much this is increased by some extraordinary visitation which a righteous Providence may inflict, being a stronger emphasis to the admonition that "Now is the accepted time, that now is the day of salvation ;" and to the excitement applicable alike to the concerns of eternity and of time — "WHATSOEVER THOU HAST TO DO, DO IT WITH THY MIGHT, FOR THERE IS NO WORK OR DEVICE IN THE GRAVE, WHITHER THOU GOEST."

CHARITY :

A Sermon

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OF PENNSYLVANIA.

1 Cor. xiii. 13—"The greatest of these is Charity."

GREATER than faith, greater than hope, how transcendent is the virtue of charity ! Chief of graces, it is the best of the good and perfect gifts which come down from the Father of lights.

But how shall we recognise this exalted Christian attainment ; how shall we test it ? Charity is one of the commonest terms in language ; and, as commonly employed, expresses some of the most frequent actions of life. Particularly in this benevolent age, scarcely an individual can be said to be without charity in one of its current senses ; and if that sense be sufficient, there must be almost none who possess not a higher quality than either faith or hope.

From such a conclusion, so over-flattering to fallen men, every mind in the least conversant with religious truth instinctively recoils. Valuable as are kindnesses to the poor, to those in any species of want, or sorrow, or ignorance, they are not to

be made a substitute for the high graces of the soul ; they are not to cast into the shade the exalted principles of faith and hope. To surpass principles so high and so holy, will require a grace more ennobling and more sanctifying. For this greatest of Christian virtues, therefore, we must look much farther and much deeper than to ordinary acts of benevolence, or to any partial traits of excellence. To this inquiry let us now devote our thoughts. No subject can be more in unison with the eucharistic solemnity. With charity for our theme, and true charity in our hearts, we cannot be unprepared for the feast which celebrates mercy from heaven and good-will among men. May the Spirit of God sanctify our meditations, and make us perfect in holy love !

In opening our subject, we are first naturally led to the remark, founded on the use of the word "charity" in different senses, that *it is the misfortune of language to be continually varying*. Words which once had a definite signification, come to be employed with looseness, and at length change materially their sense. This were of small moment if the things before signified received new appellations, and correct ideas of them were thus preserved. But too often with the misapplied word, the subject itself passes into a mistaken apprehension. These changes have been exemplified in the word "charity." We now appropriate that word, sometimes to mere alms-giving, sometimes to that gentle and unsuspecting candor which prompts a kind construction of the conduct of others, and sometimes even to that passiveness which concedes largely to error itself. In opposition to these several mistakes, we remark that the Apostle declares that "all our goods may be bestowed to feed the poor" while we yet are destitute of "charity;" that, though candid and kind feeling is one particular of charity, it cannot be that entire virtue which is the greatest of the ornaments of grace ; and that scriptural charity is never passive concerning opinions, since it "rejoiceth not in iniquity," but only and exclusively "in the truth." It is evident, therefore, that when the present translation of the Bible was made, the word "charity" had a nobler signification than it usually has in our day.

For this reason, it has been proposed to substitute the word "love" in the present chapter, and in some other passages. And this would be much nearer the true sense, than any word which is understood of only a few kind actions, or benevolent thoughts, or complying dispositions. Love, universal love, toward God and toward men, is unquestionably the highest attainment of a Christian, for it marks the entire subjection of the spirit of self, and this indicates the subjection of the spirit of depravity. Love is the bond of the spiritual universe, enclosing men and angels within one circle, of which the Godhead is the centre. Love is the pervading light which animates with one impulse all holy creatures, diffused from the eternal throne, reflected from spirit to spirit, and from soul to soul, and returning, in rays almost infinitely intermingled, to its divine source. Such is the grace of love, a kind affection uniting every holy creature with every other, and all with their God, and Saviour, and Sanctifier.

Sublime as is such a sentiment, it yet comes short of the full and true meaning of "charity." Strictly speaking, love is the mere inward grace or principle, charity is that principle in operation; love is experienced within the heart, charity comprises both the heart and the life. The sentiment of love cannot indeed be genuine, except as it is practical; but charity, rightly defined, comprehends within itself both the perfection of the sentiment and principle, and the faithful practice of it. He who has only some moving of sensibility presumed to be "love," might deem it the grace commended by St. Paul, should we let it pass by that name: but if we retain the practical term "charity," in the corrected and entire sense now given it, no one can thus deceive himself. We conclude, therefore, that the language of our translation in this and like passages cannot be changed with advantage, but that the common and loose conception of the meaning of the word in question, arising from the mutability of language, must be corrected, our idea of charity must be improved and exalted, and the word restored to its original signification. Charity, then, is more than alms-giving, more than candor, and a meek judgment, more than individual kind

affections, and very different from passiveness concerning the truth ; it is the divine principle of love, united with its practice, being in its entireness, felt and fulfilled toward all beings to whom we bear any known relation, toward God and toward men. The “greatest” of all virtues is such “charity.”

And now, under the light of these remarks, let us prosecute further the illustration of this exalted grace.

The *origin of this sentiment* is in the kindness bestowed on us by the Deity ; “we love Him, because He first loved us.” High and holy, therefore, as is this virtue, it is not, taken as a whole, one of pure disinterestedness. Some of the emotions of love are undoubtedly an admiration of the Deity simply for His infinite excellences ; but, for the most part, we combine with this admiration the idea that the perfections of God have produced benefits, both temporal and eternal, to ourselves. Angels and men owe their existence to the Divine benevolence, their preservation, their every comfort, and every grace, and it necessarily follows that much of their best love assumes the shape of gratitude, and has reference to benefits conferred. While, therefore, we would not undervalue the disinterested admiration of God, we would guard against its evaporating in a mere sentimental attachment to Him ; we would convert that attachment into a subduing and practical love of the Deity. In order to this, we must keep in mind “all His benefits,” and thus “love God because He first loved us.”

This virtue, we are further to remark, is *to occupy our every and entire capacity* ; we are “to love the LORD our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, with all our strength.” Love to God is to control every part of our nature, is to engage to the uttermost our affections, and govern our whole conduct. It is to pervade our every feeling, our every thought, our every word, our every action : not indeed that we are to profess continually “LORD, LORD,” nor that we are to exhibit in any manner too gross our heartfelt communion with the Deity ; but there should be spread over our deeds and our conversation those delicate shades of divine love, which, though the ignorant and blind fail to recognise them, will be discerned

and esteemed by all who are enlightened. Such a grace is the deep stamp of heaven, imprinting the name of God on our every spiritual feeling and principle, and on our every spiritual deed and habit. Such love toward God is "charity" in its highest sense. This word is expressly applied, in certain old writings, to our true affection for the Deity; hence the homilies declare, "Charity is to love God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our powers and strength;" again, "Charity stretcheth itself both to God and man."* Such a term applied to beings above us may seem misplaced, but we ought to conform our ideas to this ancient and more correct mode of speaking; it gives the meaning of the word when the Bible was translated. Charity toward God is the fulfilment of every thing that the love of Him suggests in a holy bosom, its fulfilment "with all our heart, and soul, and strength."

This love of God, be it especially borne in mind, we are to exercise under a full understanding and acknowledgment of our obligation to the Redeemer. Through the Redeemer we receive all kindness and mercy, and through Him must our gratitude for every kindness and mercy be returned. God loves us only through CHRIST, and through CHRIST only do we acceptably love God; as is implied in language he used to his disciples, "The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me;" and again, intimating the several links in the chain of love, which unites men through their Redeemer to their God, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you;" love descends from the Father first to CHRIST, and from CHRIST it descends to us; through Him only are we in the love of God. And, as by the Saviour "all things consist," as to Him we owe our life, our preservation, all comfort, and all grace, so our every grateful emotion should be sent upward in the incense of the merits of the cross. Here is the warmest and deepest exercise of Christian love, to trace the value of a mediator, of CHRIST, the one mediator between God and men, in every bounty granted us, as all is for His sake; to acknowledge His intercession, in every

* Homilies, Swords' edit. p. 50, 53.

grace that advances us to final pardon, and His strength, in every victory which overcomes our carnal mind, and brings our crown into nearer prospect. A deep exercise of Christian love it is to recognise that Mediator, not only in regard to spiritual things, the spiritual benefits and gifts of which He is peculiarly the centre, but also in the daily courses of earthly things, whether they bring prosperity to win us, or adversity to give us wholesome correction. Of ourselves, we are fallen, and have forfeited every privilege and every hope; but in CHRIST, we are restored; through CHRIST, both earthly and spiritual blessings have again become ours, and eternal happiness also awaits our acceptance. For thus restoring us, and for doing it at the cost of so much humiliation and agony, the Saviour is entitled to love peculiarly ardent, to service and devotedness peculiarly replete with holy sensibility.

The love of the FATHER and of CHRIST introduces the love of men for their sakes; "If GOD so loved us, we ought also to love one another." And, as our Saviour declares, that what is done to the least of our brethren is done unto Him, and that what is refused to them is refused to Him, we have authority for regarding the love we devote to our fellow-creatures as, in a great degree, the standard for ascertaining how much unfeigned love we devote to GOD. Love to men must in this view include not only aid to the necessitous, and kindness toward all who are bound to us by the ties of kindred, of friendship, of acquaintance, but must also seek the welfare of mankind at large, of those of them over whom GOD may give us influence. More especially will charity endeavor to forward the moral and spiritual improvement of men; and this it will do by counsel seasonably administered, and by candidly and firmly opposing error and delusion, knowing that these are the greatest and most real enemies to human happiness, and that charity rejoiceth only in the truth. And, in thus seeking the eternal good of men, sound charity will use the instrument which GOD has appointed, and which himself uses for that purpose; — that instrument is the Church of CHRIST. Above all, it is required by charity to our fellow-beings, as well as by duty to GOD, that

we let our light shine before men, in a godly, but unobtrusive example, "showing out of a good conversation our works with meekness of wisdom." This is "charity" indeed, charity to the souls as well as the bodies of immortal beings; charity to the household of God; charity to the great family of mankind. These duties, performed through the love of God, will be accepted by the Saviour as done unto himself.

And this love to mankind is to be without any exceptions, no enmity or bitterness is to exclude even one mortal from our benign affections. To human nature, weakened by depravity, this is a hard precept: but it is express; and the obstinate refusal to obey it is, we are assured, a deadly sin; "If ye, from the heart, forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." Let this denunciation warn us to avoid enmities, if possible; and if they arise, to expel them at once from our hearts. And, for our encouragement in fulfilling a duty so difficult, let us reflect, that it was "while we were enemies that we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." In this branch, the forgiveness and love of our enemies are the most exalted exercises of charity. It was thus that God "commended his love toward us;" and, by excelling in this branch, we shall most effectually commend our love toward God.

The duty of love, we are lastly to note, includes *a reasonable and genuine love of one's self*. Self-love is, however, generally misunderstood, and therefore undervalued; nay, accounted base. The gratification of appetite, of vanity, of ambition, of avarice, all have the name of self-love: but alas, they are all opposed to the real and best interests of self. They are like the indulgence claimed by a child, which, though it affords temporary pleasure, unfits him for honorable and energetic manhood. The manhood of an immortal being comes not until hereafter; here, we are but under education, preparing for our eternal maturity; and if we give the present life to indulgence in evil, we destroy the future. It is therefore as incorrect to call the worldly or wicked gratifications of riper years self-love, as it is to give that name to the hurtful caprices of infancy and childhood.

True self-love is expressed in the maxim of our Saviour, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" True self-love is the anxiety and effort to secure our personal salvation. In this view, it becomes the first of our duties. Nor indeed is it unworthy of this eminence from its very difficulty; for in no other department is it less easy to give to love the features of true charity. Who would deny that men love themselves? and yet, who can ascribe to the majority of them real charity to self? If we believe that the day of judgment will bring everlasting punishment on all who fail of life eternal, we cannot doubt that self-hatred is the unnatural principle that rules in disguise in the hearts of men. And it must rank as the most signal delusion of the evil one, that he can inveigle men into a self-love which is void of self charity. The Christian who has the true light of love will let it shine in brightest charity upon his own soul.

On a subject, my brethren, so important and of such wide application, we might extend our remarks, but it is time to concentrate them upon the sacramental ordinance of which we are now to partake.

The holy supper is closely connected with the grace of charity, it is the festival of love. Are we at enmity with the Sovereign of heaven? have iniquities separated between us and our God? We come in humility and with confessions of guilt to the footstool of His throne, the altar; we ask forgiveness; and the Father of mercies here grants it: He not only pardons us, but restores us to His love. Are we ungrateful to the Redeemer who hath borne our sorrows and carried our griefs, who was wounded for our transgressions, and bare our sins in His own body on the tree? have we trampled His blood under foot, and crucified Him afresh by our misdeeds? We approach at the altar, the memorial of his sacrifice for sin; we approach it as we would the cross itself; we weep for his agony and passion, and more deeply for the guilt staining our conscience, which made that agony and passion necessary; we renounce every wickedness, even to the right hand or the right eye, if they cause us to offend; and He who was touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and was tempted in all points as we are, will

again welcome us to His love, and assure us, "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace." Are we rebelling against the HOLY SPIRIT, doing despite to His good motions in our hearts, grieving Him by our uncured infirmities, or vexing Him by our unconquered sins? If we return to Him sincerely in this ordinance, He will not forsake us; gentle as the dove, He would win again our affections, restore us to His tenderness, and open a deep and cheering communion with our reviving spirits. Faith and hope are exalted graces; but the love mutually sealed between us and heaven in the eucharistic festival, far transcends them.

In, also, this feast of love, the Christian embraces every brother in the bosom of Christian friendship. His charity will in their behalf, "bear all things, believe all things, endure and hope all things." His charity will be benevolent to them in distress, courteous in intercourse with them, gentle yet firm in winning them to the truth, and studious in every way to promote their salvation. Has then any brother, through want of caution, or through infirmity, suffered the chain of this good-will to be broken? here is the place to repair it. Here, where CHRIST gives us the symbol of that blood which made peace for us with God, we surely cannot refuse to be at peace with any who equally share His redemption; we cannot surely, in this place, hate any whom the Saviour loves. Charity should reign in perfection among those who bend at the same altar. O then, my brethren, let us not esteem this a hard duty; let us regard it as infinitely repaid by the happiness that will attend it! What unspeakable happiness, to feel that not one beating of our hearts, and not one breathing of our bosoms, is other than in unison with the peace of those whom God hath made of one blood with us, and, by the one blood of CHRIST, hath with us purchased and redeemed.

In love to God, and in love to men, may we, my brethren, find at the altar both strength and comfort for our hearts; and may our lives attest that "charity is the bond of perfectness!"